

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 22, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of the global supply chain, causing disruptions that have impacted all Americans. Supply chain shortages have been felt acutely across the entire health care sector, hampering our ability to provide essential health care services. We thank the Biden-Harris Administration for prioritizing actions that address supply shortages, but are deeply concerned about the current semiconductor shortage, which poses a direct threat to women's health and cancer screening. As such, we seek your assistance to address the impact of semiconductor supply issues in the short-term to ensure we can maintain timely delivery of care, especially access to cancer screening.

Manufacturers of medical devices and diagnostics make up less than 1% of the overall semiconductor chip market. However, these essential products are critical for healthcare delivery and necessary to maintain our country's screening and preventative care infrastructure. Semiconductor chips are a critical component of mammography screening equipment, both the manufacturing of new equipment, and the maintenance of existing equipment. And at a time when we are urging Americans to return to regular health screenings, which according to CDC precipitously dropped by 87% for breast screening during the pandemic, it is critical that access is not further threatened due to this shortage. This is especially crucial for underserved populations, including minorities and those in rural and impoverished areas, who are already disproportionately affected by screening delays and higher breast cancer rates, and generally have only one point of access to mammography care.

We applaud the recent announcement by the Biden-Harris Administration to strengthen the domestic manufacture of semiconductors and appreciate the important role this announcement will play to strengthen U.S. chip manufacturing, increase U.S. manufacturing jobs, and reduce future semiconductor shortages. However, we believe additional, immediate action is necessary to ensure semiconductors are available to manufacturers of medical devices and technologies so we can maintain access to and deliver quality care, especially cancer screenings. As noted by President Biden's recent remarks on the Cancer Moonshot Initiative, 9 million cancer screenings were missed in the past two years, demonstrating the urgency of this public health emergency.

We recognize that Congress has a responsibility to help address this issue through legislation. We are pleased that the House-passed America COMPETES Act and Senate-passed U.S. Innovation and Competition Act provide \$52 billion for semiconductor chip production with inclusion of the CHIPS Act and to address supply chain disruptions. In particular, the America COMPETES Act includes bipartisan provisions that would authorize \$46 billion to strengthen supply chains critical to the nation's economic vitality and national security by providing access to capital for manufacturers and mitigating supply chain vulnerabilities. However, support from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is also required to address the immediate and urgent needs of the medical device industry. As the White House declared, the pandemic caused "major demand shocks" to the supply of semiconductors, and we believe this situation warrants the use of emergency authorities by the Administration to protect the public health.

Further, given the vital importance of medical devices to the health and well-being of all Americans, and the timeliness of this worsening situation, we seek answers to the following questions:

1. What specific actions have been taken by HHS to ensure that semiconductors are available for the health sector?
2. Has HHS sponsored the applications of any medical technology companies for rated order prioritization?
3. Does HHS consider the total impact on public health when evaluating medical device companies' requests for government intervention and assistance obtaining semiconductors?
4. What additional steps have been taken to ensure the health care sector is appropriately prioritized for semiconductors?

We understand that mammography systems are not the only medical devices impacted by the semiconductor shortage, but they provide a salient example of the urgent importance of shoring up the semiconductor supply. We thank you for the vital role HHS is serving in this emergency and hope you will provide immediate assistance to address the semiconductor supply shortage. It is essential that the Administration work quickly and collaborate with Congress to ensure a viable supply of semiconductors for devices necessary to protect the public health and provide uninterrupted access to cancer screening. Thank you for your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

